

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

INFO USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 193940

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CB, CH

SUBJECT: ALLEGED "NATIONALIST" APPROACH TO SIHANOUK

REF: PEKING 1141

1. EMBASSY PHNOM PENH WILL BE ABLE TO GIVE A FULLER RUN-DOWN ON THE POSSIBLE MAKEUP OF THE GROUP OF "NATIONALISTS" ALLEGEDLY INCLUDING KOCH SAN. THE LATTER HAS BEEN A FAIRLY COMPETENT ADMINISTRATOR IN THE PAST AND AFTER THE FALL OF SIHANOUK WAS SECRETARY GENERAL IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, UNTIL HE WAS NAMED MINISTER OF COMMERCE IN JULY OF 1972. AS A CUSTOMS OFFICER UNDER SIHANOUK, KOCH SAN APPARENTLY TRIED TO CUT DOWN GRAFT BUT WAS INSTEAD FIRED BY INTERESTED PARTIES. HE WAS LATER VINDICATED BY SIHANOUK. KOCH SAN IS MARRIED TO A MINOR PRINCESS WHO FORMERLY MAINTAINED CLOSE TIES WITH THE COURT. HE HAS BEEN LOYAL TO LON NOL, BUT IT IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT HE FEELS THE

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SITUATION DEMANDS THE RETURN OF THE PRINCE.

2. KENG VANNSAK IS AN EVEN MORE COMPLEX INDIVIDUAL. A BRILLIANT LINGUIST AND POLITICAL DILETTANTE, HE WAS A LEFTIST IN THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY DURING THE MID-FIFTIES AND INCURRED THE DISPLEASURE OF THE PRINCE ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS, THE LAST BEING IN 1967 DURING THE ROUNDUP OF LEFTISTS. GLIB AND FACILE, HE IS THE SOURCE OF THE MARSHAL'S MANY ARCANE CONCEPTS OF THE GREATER KHMER-MON CIVILIZATION. HE HAS SINCE 1970 BEEN A STRONG SUPPORTER OF THE MARSHAL

AND CLOSETO LON NON. HE HAS DISPLAYED LITTLE LOVE FOR THOSE IN THE GKR LIKE HANG THUN HAK WHO ADVOCATED A THIRD FORCE IN CAMBODIA. FOR THESE REASONS WE ARE PUZZLED BY REPORT THAT VANNSAK IS BEING USED AS A CHANNEL TO PEKING. HOWEVER, HE IS ABOVE ALL AN OPPORTUNIST. MORE IMPORTANTLY, HE HATES THE CHINESE AND FEARS THAT THE CHINESE RACE WILL "SINICIZE" CAMBODIA. IT IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE THAT KENG VANNSAK WOULD NOW FORESEE A PARTITION OF CAMBODIA AS DESCRIBED IN THE REFTTEL TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE KHMER BODY POLITIC.

3. ON BALANCE, FROM WHAT HAS BEEN THUS FAR REVEALED, THE PROPOSAL COULD WELL HAVE BEEN MADE. KISSINGER

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